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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to assess a profile of the "self" within the administrative, supervisory, and leadership roles of the superintendent as reflected in the perceptions of significant members of the school community. Evaluation of superintendents has too frequently turned on the nature of personal relationships with board members, failing to effectively distinguish the superintendent's roles as both leaders and managers. The "Educational Leadership" forms of the "Self-Perceptions Inventory" (1999) was administered to 68 district superintendents and 55 principals from elementary, middle, and high schools in both urban and suburban districts in the Northeastern United States. The instrument included three measures of self-perception. The "Self as a Person" scale, a semantic differential format with 36 pairs of bipolar traits (for example, "optimistic vs. pessimistic") provides a profile separate from the institutional role of the leader. The "Self as Leader" scale uses the same format with different paired to traits to yield a profile of leadership traits. The "Self as Manager" scale uses a 4-point semantic differential with 40 sets of phrases related to management functions. These phrases fall into the five broad categories of instructional leadership, legal/political issues, group dynamics, organizational development, and resource allocation. The results of this study indicate that superintendents see their roles in accordance with ability to "satellize" around school board members and believe, accurately, that their constituents view them less favorably than they see themselves. Principals' self images are more closely aligned with students and teachers than with supervisors, parents, and peers. Future longitudinal research should track principals as they assume positions as superintendents. (Contains 10 references and 5 data tables.) (TEJ)

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IMAGES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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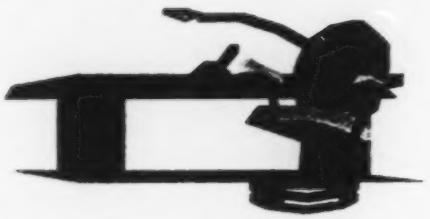

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Images of the Superintendent

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Objectives. The purpose of the study was (1) to assess a profile of the self within the administrative, supervisory, and leadership roles of the superintendent at different levels and (2) the self as reflected in the eyes of significant others in the school environment.

Perspective. The superintendent maintains many roles in his/her tenure as the top educational leader in a school district and therefore has many constituencies. Evaluation of persons in the role of superintendent has generally proved to be difficult for most school board members. Too often they have resorted to assessing the value of the superintendent by how well he/she has related to the school board members themselves. Part of the problem, however, lies in the hurdle of separating the roles of the superintendent into leader and manager. Another part of the problem lies in the instrumentation for assessing the effectiveness of the agent in the role of superintendent.

Little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of school superintendents in either role, possibly because the position has often been viewed as idiosyncratic--to the individual function, the school district's differing goals, and the emphases of the board members. In recent years, the research literature on educators has focused on teachers and the building principals (Anderson, Herr & Nihlem, 1994; Joyce, 1990; Lieberman, 1988, 1992).

In contrast, the evaluation process for the building principal typically follows a different path. It often includes peer review and assessment of the principal by others at central office who assist the superintendent. Much of the research on effective schools pointed to the function of the principal to provide leadership and support to the teaching staff, to set goals, and to foster the implementation of those goals (Linney & Seidman, 1989; Mosteller, 1995; Rutter, 1983; Sadowski, 1995; Stringfield & Teddlie, 1991). Little has been said about the contribution to such efforts by the superintendent.

Methods. The "Educational Leadership" forms of the *Self-Perceptions Inventory (revised 1999)* were administered to superintendents and school principals to assess the following self-perceptions:

- Self as a Person
- Self as a Leader
- Self as a Manager
- Ideal Self as a Leader
- Ideal Self as a Manager
- Reflected Self in terms of peers, supervisors, teachers, parents, students, school board members, and community leaders
- Perceptions of Others--a companion scale that provides a profile of school administrators from the constituencies noted above (to obtain a measure of the validity of the self-pictures)

The companion scale, Perceptions of Others, was distributed to the others listed above to obtain a measure of validity of the self-pictures.

In the Self as a Person scale, a semantic differential format with 36 pairs of bipolar traits provides a profile of the superintendent as separate from the role. Examples: self-confident vs. insecure, optimistic vs. pessimistic, patient vs. impatient.

In the Self as a Leader scale, the same format is used, yielding a profile of traits important to an educational leader. Examples: knowledgeable vs. uninformed, enthusiastic vs. indifferent, fair vs. unfair.

In the Self as a Manager scale, the four-point semantic differential is used with 40 sets of phrases related to management functions, to which the respondents agree or disagree with the statement as attributable to the self. These phrases fall within five broad categories of:

1. Instructional Leadership
2. Legal & Political Issues
3. Group Dynamics
4. Organizational Development
5. Resource Allocation.

Data Sources. The superintendent pool consisted of 68 top executives from urban and suburban school districts from the northeast. Another pool for the purpose of comparison contained 55 school principals from urban and suburban schools at the three levels of elementary, middle, and high schools. To add to the self-profiles, representatives of the various constituencies were asked to rate the administrators on the same traits and functions that the administrators used for their self-perceptions.

Results of the Test Analysis. Reliability coefficients of the scales ranged from .85 to .91, assessing stability and internal consistency. Validity coefficients ranged from .33 to .51, assessing content, concurrent, predictive, and construct forms of validity. The item factor loadings ranged from .41 to .84. Tables 1, 2, and 3 display the specifics of the test analysis.

Results of the Score Analysis. The mean scores indicated consistently and significantly higher self-perceptions from the superintendents for self as a person than was found for principals in this study or teachers from a pervious series of research studies (e.g., Soares, 1990). Superintendents saw themselves as more effective leaders and managers than did the school principals, with the mean manager scores consistently highest of all.

The most interesting results came from the comparisons of their reflected selves in the eyes of various constituencies and the actual ratings of representatives from those constituencies. In all cases, the superintendents tended to see that others did not view them anywhere near the height of their own self-perceptions, except for school board members. The school board ratings actually were very close to the superintendents' self-perceptions, in contrast to all the other ratings.

The charted perceptions of the superintendents are noted in Table 4, as summarized from the mean scores in the original analysis. The companion analysis for the school principals is found in Table 5.

Discussion. It is clear from the results that superintendents tend to see themselves in their roles in accordance with their ability to satellize around the school board members. This is really not surprising since the school board has the authority to hire, fire, reward, renew contracts, and otherwise reinforce the work of the superintendent. In this study, the superintendents believe that other constituents see them in less favorable light than they do themselves--and they are correct in their assessments about the opinions these others hold of the superintendents. Unless, of course, these others cause friction and problems to such an extent that they reach the level of the school board to resolve, the interactional and mutual support of the superintendents and their school boards would tend to perpetuate the self-pictures of effectiveness of the superintendents and maintain their hold on the office of the superintendency.

A somewhat different picture emerged for the principals. Their self-images are closely aligned with the perceptions of them from students and teachers and less closely related to those from supervisors, parents, and peers. The views that they hold of their roles as leader and manager are very close. In contrast, the superintendents' self concepts are quite different as leader and as manager.

Future Research. The next phase in this research series would seem to be longitudinal in following the careers of the principals as some of them move from principal to superintendent. Will those who do move up to the role of superintendent change their self-perceptions to be closer to the picture painted above? And what about those who move into middle management positions--e.g., curriculum coordinator, assistant superintendent, etc? Would their self concepts be closer to what they were and where they came from or where they are going?

Such is the direction for future research.

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Table 1

Intercorrelations of Scale Clusters*

Intercorrelations of Self as Manager Scales

FACTORS	A	B	C	D	E	FACTORS
A	[.91]	(.40)	(.51)	(.47)	(.33)	A
B	(.40)	[.93]	(.36)	(.37)	(.45)	B
C	(.51)	(.36)	[.90]	(.41)	(.39)	C
D	(.47)	(.37)	(.41)	[.93]	(.38)	D
E	(.33)	(.45)	(.39)	(.38)	[.88]	E

CODE :

A Instructional Leadership
B Legal & Political Issues
C Group Dynamics
D Organizational Development
E Resource Allocation

Reliability Coefficients: Bold, diagonal

* SELF-PERCEPTIONS INVENTORY, Educational Leadership Forms

Table 2

Summary of Factor Characteristics (Self as Manager Scale)*

ITEM ANALYSES	SCALE				
	A	B	C	D	E
Number of Items	8	8	8	8	8
Range of Item Factor Loadings	59 to 75	71 TO 84	58 to 74	41 TO 62	54 to 64
Item-Factor Multiple	90	90	87	82	74
Adjusted R-square	81	81	76	67	54
Reliability (Alpha)	91	93	90	93	88

CODE:

A Instructional Leadership
B Legal & Political Issues
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* SELF-PERCEPTIONS INVENTORY, Educational Leadership Forms

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Table 3

Validity and Reliability Coefficients
SELF-PERCEPTIONS INVENTORY, Educational Leadership Forms

Validity

1.	Content validity (expert pool):	
	Leader:	.52/p < .01
	Manager:	.59/p < .01
2.	Concurrent validity (job-ratings):	
	Leader:	.56/p < .01
	Manager:	.60/p < .01
3.	Predictive validity (on-the-job success):	
	Leader:	.51/p < .01
	Manager:	.58/p < .01
4.	Construct validity (leader & manager):	.49/p < .01

Reliability

1.	Coefficient of stability (8 weeks):	.88
2.	Internal consistency (alpha):	.85

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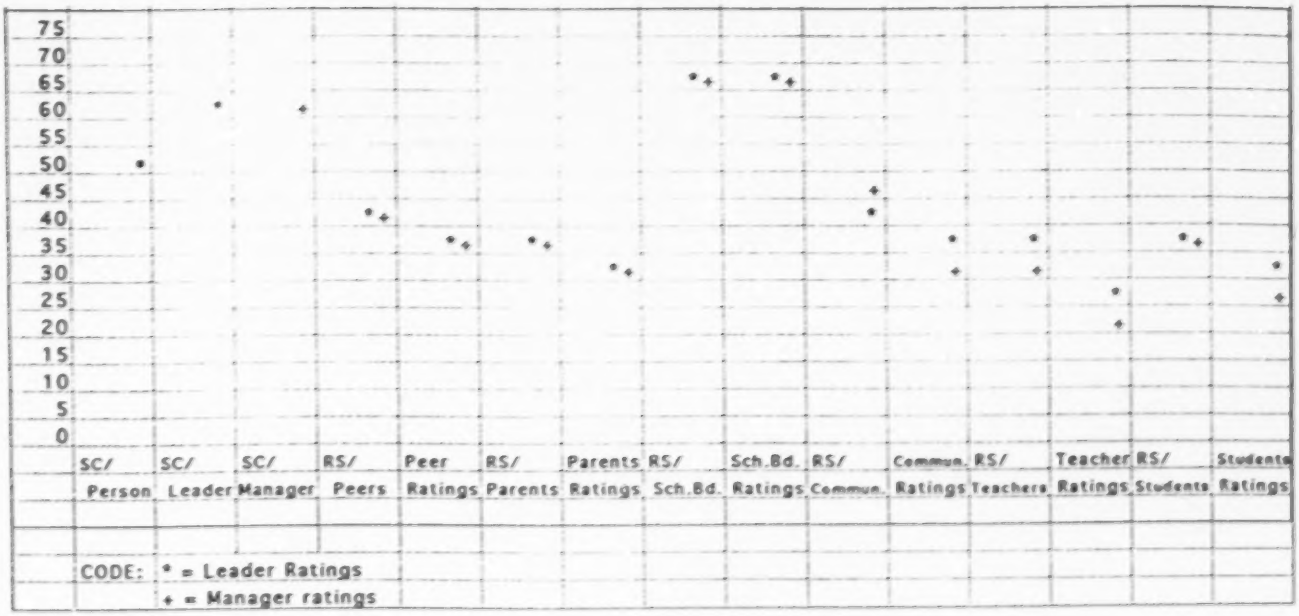
Table 4

Comparison of Self-Ratings & Other-Ratings for Superintendents' Leadership & Management Effectiveness



SELF-PERCEPTIONS INVENTORY, Educational Leadership Forms

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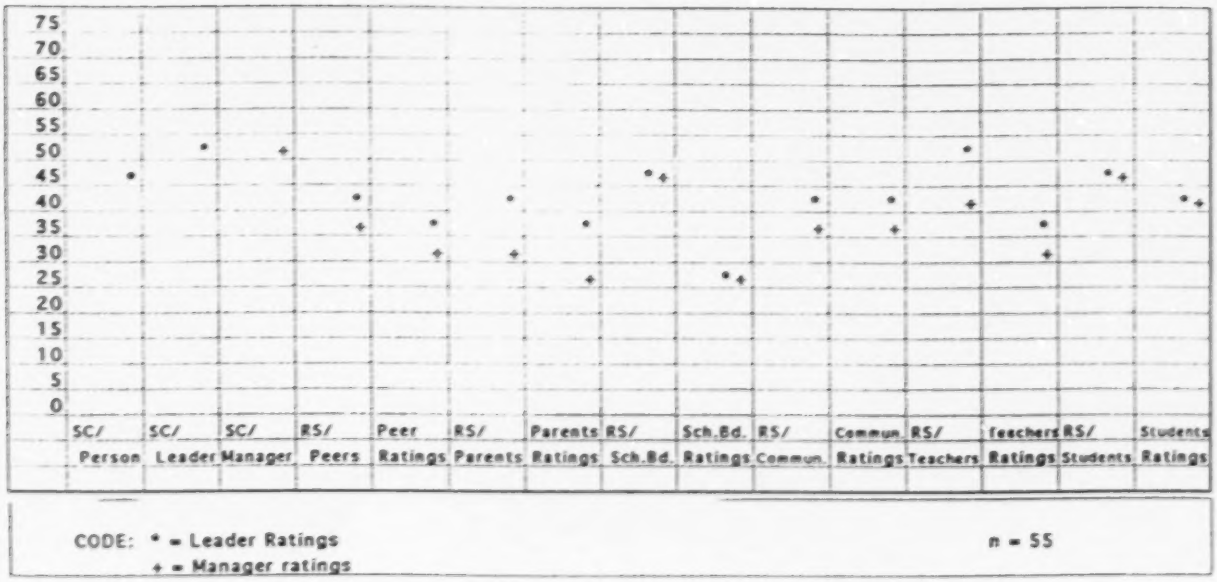
Table 5

Comparison of Self-Ratings & Other-Ratings for Principals' Leadership & Management Effectiveness



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